

COMMITTEE ON
TRANSPORTATION AND
INFRASTRUCTURE

COMMITTEE ON
HOMELAND SECURITY
DEPUTY RANKING MEMBER

COMMITTEE ON
OVERSIGHT AND
GOVERNMENT REFORM



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1802

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April 28, 2010

The Honorable Ed Towns
Chairman
Oversight and Government Reform Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
2154 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Darrell E. Issa
Ranking Member
Oversight and Government Reform Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
B-350A Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Chairman Towns and Ranking Member Issa:

On April 20, 2010, the semisubmersible drilling rig, the *Deepwater Horizon*, caught fire during drilling operations and has since sunk in the Gulf of Mexico. The rig was in the process of capping a well in the Gulf of Mexico located approximately 40 miles off the Louisiana coast. While rescue efforts have been heroic and sustained, eleven people remain missing and are feared lost, and three were critically injured. Additionally, the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) have said that, if the leaks from this oil well are not stemmed soon, it could result in one of the worst spills in U.S. history.

This tragic incident raises a number of critical and fundamental issues that require immediate Congressional attention. As a member of the Louisiana delegation to U.S. House of Representatives and as the Louisiana delegation's sole representative on the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, I respectfully request you call a hearing to address pressing issues caused by this tragedy. I also have requested the leadership of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure call a hearing to review the potential environmental and other impacts of the oil slick rapidly approaching the Louisiana coast line and the federal response to it.

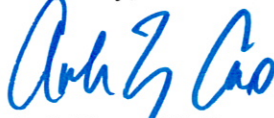
Regarding the oversight conducted by the U.S. Department of Interior's Minerals Management Service (MMS), I laud the investigation announced by the Secretaries of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and the U.S. Department of the Interior. Understanding the cause of this tragedy is critical. Reports indicate that MMS had given the rig favorable security reports during its last three routine inspections and gave the rig a safety award last year.

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It is important that a thorough investigation of MMS' certification processes is conducted to ensure those processes are thorough, clear, and strenuous. Given the recent revelations of mismanagement by senior MMS officials, it is imperative this Committee fully investigate and understand the causes of the disaster on the Deepwater Horizon and to ensure any processes in need of refining are immediately addressed. Therefore, I respectfully request a hearing to consider the efficacy of MMS' certification processes and any other related matters.

I appreciate your consideration of this urgent and important request and look forward to discussing this with you at your earliest convenience. Please do not hesitate to contact my staff, Monica Sanders, or me at (202) 225-6636.

Sincerely,



Anh "Joseph" Cao
Member of Congress